

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS
– DIRECTORATE E –
Horizontal Policies and Networks



QUESTIONNAIRE

ASSESSMENT ON TERRITORIAL IMPACTS

Submitted by Michael Schneider (DE/EPP)

Michael Schneider is the rapporteur for the CoR own initiative opinion on Assessment on territorial impacts. This opinion will discuss the European Commission's Staff Working Document on Assessing territorial impacts: operational guidance on how to assess regional and local impacts within the Commission Impact Assessment system, SWD (2013) 3 final. This questionnaire identifies important issues for the Committee of the Regions and is designed to assist in the drafting of the own initiative opinion on the assessment of territorial impacts.

Please complete and submit **by 20 March 2013**. If you are member of the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network you can upload the completed questionnaire directly onto the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network website (<http://subsidiarity.cor.europa.eu> – remember to log in). Alternatively and in case you are not member of the Network, you can send it by email to subsidiarity@cor.europa.eu.

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data.protection@cor.europa.eu). You have the right of recourse to the European Data Protection Supervisor at any time (www.edps.europa.eu). Please note that the questionnaire with your contribution and your contact details will be published online. Your questionnaire might be transmitted to CoR Rapporteurs and other EU institutions for information. If you do not wish so, please inform us accordingly.

QUESTIONS

1. The Staff Working Document states that: "the guidance provided here also responds to a request from the Member States, expressed in the debate following the 2008 Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion and under the Polish EU Presidency in 2011 as part of the Territorial Agenda process".

a) Do you consider that the document published by the European Commission meets the expectations and the ideas expressed in the political debate raised after the publication of the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion in 2008? Do you believe there is a need for greater follow-up to this debate on territorial cohesion and if yes, could you give some concrete examples?

a) The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion is one of the documents that make up the framework for initiatives designed to manage change – especially demographic change, the impact of global economic structural changes and climate change. One view to emerge from discussion of the paper was that cohesion policy should be transferred from the national to the regional and local levels. Synergy and an integrated approach between sectoral policies are important prerequisites for successful territorial cohesion. Any assessment of this cohesion should respect the responsibilities at various levels of governance and implementation: in other words, territorial cohesion should be subject to the subsidiarity principle. The purpose of territorial cohesion is to narrow the gaps between Member States and regions. It should deliver the sustainable development of geographical areas with diverse profiles and cohesion policy and sectoral policies should be tailored to the particular needs of any given area. Experience in the present programming period has convinced us that the territorial impact of current sectoral policies must be rigorously monitored. Objective statistical indicators, for example, quite clearly show widening disparities, particularly in the areas of cohesion and employment policies. Unemployment and poverty continue to rise irrespective of the economic cycle and the deployment of sectoral policies (current unemployment around 18%, poverty above 13%).

2. In order to better coordinate the territorial impact of sectoral EU policies, there needs to be a better understanding and measurement of those impacts. The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion already focused on this point, stating that "improving territorial cohesion implies better coordination between sectoral and territorial policies and improved coherence between territorial interventions".

b) Do you believe that the European Commission's proposal can be an effective instrument able to improve coordination between EU sectoral policies having territorial impacts? In your view what else should/could be done?

b) According to the EC document, territorial cohesion has three dimensions (national, regional and local levels) and national bodies should take this into account in implementing the policies for which they bear responsibility. However, it must be said in this connection that regions do not actually have any powers with which to influence the implementation of cohesion policy. The proposal stresses the need to measure the territorial impact of sectoral policies as a prerequisite for developing territorial cohesion. However, there are no attested indicators to measure the adverse and beneficial impacts of sectoral policies on a particular region. Nor is the regional level involved sufficiently closely in any endeavours to carry out this measuring. In this situation, it would seem expedient for national governments to implement cohesion policy and for the regions to measure the impact of this – in other words, to provide feedback to the national level.

3. The Staff Working Document provides operational and methodological guidance on how to answer a range of questions regarding the potential territorial impact of a given proposal. Nevertheless, it underlines that assessing territorial impacts is not mandatory, and states that it is just a tool that can be helpful to enhance the policy coherence of some policy proposals.

c) Do you consider that territorial impact assessments should be made compulsory for those sectoral policies having a territorial impact? If yes, in your opinion for which sectoral policies should the assessment of territorial impacts be made mandatory?

c) We are convinced that territorial impact assessments should be mandatory for those sectoral policies that have such an impact. In particular, this impact must be analysed in relation to implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, with due account and respect accorded to the subsidiarity principle in governance and the proportionality principle in terms of territory. It has to be said here that, even though territorial cohesion is regularly discussed and is addressed in various documents, the identification of specific territorial impacts of sectoral policies is problematic. Our view is that the territorial impact of cohesion policy, regional policy, economic policy and employment policy in particular require more rigorous assessment. We must not lose sight of who in the final analysis is the intended recipient of the outcomes of sectoral policies. A narrow circle of beneficiaries or society as a whole? If we do not manage to ensure that macroeconomic outcomes translate directly into the microeconomic level (i.e., have a territorial impact), then we are unlikely to reach to goals of the Europe 2020 strategy.

4. The Staff Working Document states that a territorial impact assessment should be carried out when the proposal explicitly focuses on specific territories or when the proposal risks having a large asymmetric territorial impact (outlier impact). It also highlights different methods that can be used to assess territorial impacts. In particular, it mentions qualitative and quantitative analysis. These tools and methodologies should be used by the different Directorates-General

at the European Commission when preparing territorial impact assessments for proposals they are responsible for.

d) Do you consider the data, methodology and tools proposed for supporting territorial impact assessments (such as ESPON ARTS¹ or QUICKScan) are sufficient to measure the potential territorial impacts a given proposal could have in your region? Would you propose any other type of tools/methodology?

e) Do you believe the complexity of territorial impact assessments require them to be carried out by a single specialised entity (one-stop shop) or do you prefer the idea of a decentralised system as proposed in the Staff Working Document?

d) The methods proposed are not sufficient because they are based on statistical data that usually bear little resemblance to the reality at regional and local authority level. (These authorities do not themselves have enough data because data collection is expensive).

e) We prefer the idea of a decentralised system of measuring territorial impact.

5. **Multilevel Governance and partnerships are key factors in the implementation of territorial cohesion, focussing on strengthening a place-based approach.** The Committee of the Regions has already asked for the assessment of specific territorial impacts and recalls the potential role² of the CoR in assisting the European Commission in the process of Impact Assessment as well as to be associated to some of the EC's initiatives towards improvements in the capacity building of regional and local authorities³.

f) What should the specific measures providing for the involvement of local and regional authorities be in these exercises?

g) What role do you see for the Committee of the Regions in this context?

f) Concluding territorial agreements with clearly defined competences for strategic planning and implementing regional development support measures between national, regional and local levels; strengthening multilevel governance; devolution of some decision-making powers to regional and local authorities.

g) The role of the Committee of the Regions should be to give political backing to the endeavours of

¹ http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/arts.html.

² See section 5.5 of the EC's Staff Working Document: "Under the Protocol on Cooperation between the Commission and the Committee of the Regions (2012) the Commission services may ask for support from the Committee in preparing its assessment.

³ CdR 353/2010, CoR Opinion on Smart Regulation.

regions to promote territorial agreements between national, regional and local levels with a view to implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy. It should also encourage central government to recognise the regions' priorities for lessening regional disparities and should lend political support to the efforts of regions to have some decision-making powers devolved to them from the national level.

6. The Committee of the Regions has already asked for territorial cohesion to be strengthened in relation to the EU2020 Strategy. One possibility for this could be not to confine the assessment of territorial impacts to legislative proposals and to extend them to other documents, such as key planning documents, such as the Annual Growth Survey.

h) Do you think there should be a territorial dimension of the EU2020 policy cycle?

i) Do you consider the Annual Growth Survey (as a key planning document for the launch of the annual EU2020 policy cycle) should contain a territorial impact assessment?

j) In your opinion, should Territorial Impact Assessments also be carried out at Member State level?

h) The Europe 2020 strategy should have a substantial territorial dimension. Its main aim, after all, is cohesion policy, which also means territorial cohesion. Achieving territorial cohesion without the territorial dimension is surely unimaginable.

i) As far as possible, Annual Growth Surveys should include an assessment of territorial impact, since this impact may only emerge some time after the measures have been deployed. Equally, if there is no territorial impact assessment in the Europe 2020 measures, how are we to get any feedback on their relevance of efficacy?

j) Territorial impact assessment based on a representative sample should be carried out above all at the regional level, since at the national level the results might be too generalised and at the local level too detailed.